

(Reposted from [Free Government Information](#) .)

On Tuesday, I received several exhortations to vote – via e-mail, Facebook, and other social networking sites. I found it somewhat amusing – since I received most of these exhortations *after* I voted. I also found it somewhat frustrating, because while voting is arguably the most powerful tool citizens have to engage with their governments, I think people are often ignorant of other ways to be civically engaged.

I should clarify that by "civic engagement," I'm referring to active dialogue with one's government. Political blogs such as [DailyKos](#) and [Instapundit](#) have hundreds of thousands of subscribers. I'm willing to bet that far more people read political news and blogs than read government publications like the Federal Register - and actually respond to its requests for comments.

I've been thinking about U.S. government publications people can read and respond to in order to be more actively involved. Here's what I've come up with so far:

- [The Congressional Record](#) . A daily record of the debates, committee meetings, and other goings-on of Congress, the Congressional Record seems the best way to stay aware of both current legislative issues, and the actions of one's duly elected representatives. Although the Congressional Record itself does not solicit feedback, communicating with one's Senators and Representatives (or their offices) seems to be a popular way for people to participate in their government. This document can help citizens identify what they should be talking to their Senators and Representatives about.

- [Congressional Calendars & Schedules](#) . Like the Congressional Record, these calendars may be of use to people in helping citizens identify topics they may want to discuss with their Senators and Congresspersons.

- [The Federal Register](#) . I became intrigued with the Federal Register after listening to a presentation about it at this year's [Interagency Depository Seminar](#) . While many people might find this daily record of proposed regulations and policy dull, I think FGI's own James R. Jacobs put it best [a few months ago](#)

- "Regulations and regulatory law are the implementation of legislated law and make all the difference in how laws are enforced and how activities of all citizens are, well..., regulated." I think the National Archives & Records Administration has also done a lot to make the Register

more accessible to the average user - they've set up

[a separate site](#)

where a user can search the regulations and contribute comments on them, and they've also set up an RSS feed so people can receive updates to the Federal Register from the comfort of their own RSS readers.

- [Government blogs](#). While many of the blogs on this list seem very specific and may not be of interest to the citizenry-at-large (sorry, Future Digital System, I'm looking at you), others seem to capture an active conversation between government agencies and citizens. For example, take a look at [Evolution of Security](#), a blog written by several employees at the Transportation Security Administration.

[A recent entry about carrying liquids through security checkpoints](#)

received over 150 comments - some from the bloggers, some from citizens, and even some from Transportation Security Officers.

- [Contact Your Government \(By Topic\)](#). Another web page compiled by USA.gov, this page can help citizens locate contact information for government officials on the federal and state levels.

I've also been considering what kind of state and local government publications can encourage civic engagement. I found this wonderful page from [the State of Maine](#), which includes schedules of public meetings and hearings and online discussion forums. The site also includes several sets of instructions and tips, on topics ranging from running for office to initiating petitions and referendums to communicating effectively with one's legislators.

What are some other federal, state, and local government publications that solicit citizen engagement?